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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SW](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION SUPPORTS TROOP INCREASE IN AFGHANISTAN

Ref: A. STOCKHOLM 771

[1](#)B. STOCKHOLM 770

[1](#)1. Summary: Despite internal dissent within the party, Sweden's opposition Social Democrats decided formally on December 4 to support the government's bill extending and increasing Sweden's ISAF deployment. It is, therefore, almost certain that the bill will be approved by Parliament on or about December 18. End summary.

[1](#)2. On November 13, Sweden's governing center-right alliance presented to Parliament a bill to extend and increase Sweden's presence in Afghanistan. The bill concerns both the military contribution to ISAF, including planned troop increases from 375 to around 500, and the design of a new development assistance strategy, with aid to increase from roughly 37.5 million USD to 62.5 million USD per year (ref A-B).

[1](#)3. On December 4, the opposition Social Democrat Party (SDP), which holds the largest number of seats in Parliament, decided formally to support the government's bill. SDP leaders made this decision despite an ongoing internal dispute over Afghanistan policy. The left wing of the party openly opposes SDP leader Mona Sahlin and foreign policy spokesman Urban Ahlin's support for a troop increase. Tage G. Peterson (former Minister for Defense), Pierre Schori (former UN Ambassador and former Deputy Foreign Minister) and Bo Ringholm (MP and former Finance Minister) continue their efforts to create and sustain opposition among the party rank and file, reminding them in public speeches and op-eds about the low public support for Sweden's military presence in Afghanistan and the need for even more aid efforts.

[1](#)4. Comment: Given the SDP's formal support, the ISAF bill will almost certainly be passed by Parliament on or about December 18. End Comment.

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